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FEATURED

High School referee numbers in decline; fans and coaches could be to blame

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High school official Donald Gilmore hears an earful from McCracken County head coach Scott Sivils but keeps his eyes focused on Angela Gierhart and the play at hand earlier this year.

File Photo

With the decrease of available referees in our region, The Laker Review staff believes coaches, players and even fans need to recognize how valuable referees are and reevaluate how they treat them.

According to CCHS Athletic Director Greg Butler, there is an assigning secretary who assigns officials to referee games and tournaments for every sport in every region.

Ben Crenshaw, the assigning secretary for our region's softball games, said he has a shortage of officials to officiate softball.

"I am about 8-10 short of what I need," Crenshaw said.

Crenshaw said that out of the few officials he does have, few are under the age of 40. In fact, half of his officials are 50 and older.

Brett Miles, the assigning secretary for the basketball games in our region, has an explanation as to why new officials are hard to come by.

"The new officials start out but do not last," Miles said. "Most do not like the criticism or being yelled at."

According to KHSAA.org, "More than 75 percent of all high school officials say 'adult behavior' is the primary reason they quit. And 80 percent of all young officials hang up their stripes after just two years of whistle blowing."

"I have seen coaches mistreat officials. I have seen players mistreat officials. The majority of treatment, though, comes from fans," Butler said.

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Butler explained what mistreatment can look like from each group.

